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President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda items 60 and 10 (*continued*)

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Report of the Secretary-General (A/58/323)

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/58/1)

Mr. Ivanou (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belarus, Mr. Sergei Martynov, speaking last week in the general debate, touched on several important aspects of the work of the United Nations over the past year. Today, I wish to draw representatives' attention to a few fundamental issues.

The report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization and his statement of 23 September do not merely contain statements of fact. They were, in a way, a call to action to improve the structures and mechanisms of the Organization and to reform the work of the basic organs, as well as to equip the Organization with adequate means to effectively respond to the threats and challenges of the twenty-first century.

We in Belarus take for granted that the stable functioning of the Organization is an essential precondition for the elimination of diktat and pressure in international life and the construction of a sustainable just and dynamic developing world. We, therefore, welcome the Secretary-General's intention to set up a high-level panel of eminent personalities to prepare, for the fifty-ninth session, recommendations on the reform of its institutions and processes.

Over the past year, the United Nations has had to carry out its work within the context of the complicated circumstances of the as yet unresolved Iraq crisis and the Middle East question, as well as the resurgence of international terrorism. Unfortunately, the Organization did not demonstrate fully its unique ability in maintaining peace and security. The Secretary-General is right when he says that, if the Security Council does not restore the confidence of the countries of the world in the near future, then States will themselves decide on and carry out measures they believe will help ensure their own security. There is already a trend towards the fragmentation and decentralization of the international security system.

That is a clear signal of the need to strengthen the role of the United Nations, as a key element in the collective resolution of today's most acute problems. We believe that, in the next year or two, the open-ended working group on equitable representation in the Security Council and on increasing its membership should arrive at a definitive outcome — the reform of the Council. Greater equitable representation on the Council will mean more equitable Council decisions.

It is extremely important that the United Nations play a coordinating role with the international community in the fight against terrorism. The Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) continues to contribute enormously to the efforts of the United Nations to reinforce United Nations potential in the fight against

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terrorism and for the formation of a broad international coalition to counter this great ill of our times. The Republic of Belarus expresses its interest in broadening its contacts with that authoritative body, including obtaining technical assistance to fight terrorist potential.

An effective step in countering terrorism might be the adoption of international agreements such as the draft comprehensive convention on international terrorism and the international convention on the prevention of acts of nuclear terrorism. We call for more vigorous work on these important documents, with a view to overcoming existing disagreements on key issues. It is important to remember that our failure to come together on these issues simply plays into the hands of terrorists.

At the same time, the global fight against the threat of terrorism should not lead to the restriction of or infringement upon fundamental human rights. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights should play an important role within the CTC, and, as the Secretary-General rightly pointed out in his report on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, the Committee must avoid politicization and must act in the interest of all members of the international community.

Belarus has always expressed support for an exclusively peaceful resolution of the Iraq crisis. My Government welcomes the adoption by the Security Council of the relevant resolutions emerging from consensus among the members of the Council. The Republic of Belarus considers that the central role of coordinating the activities of the international community regarding the settlement of the Iraqi situation and the restoration of its sovereignty and economy should belong to the United Nations.

The establishment of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Iraq is a timely and sensible step taken under the auspices of the United Nations in addressing economic, humanitarian, political and other pressing issues.

The Security Council and the General Assembly have played an important role in settling African problems. We are now seeing the gradual normalization of the situation in Liberia. Progress has been achieved and a Transitional Government has been set up in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. There has also been progress in Côte d'Ivoire. However, these shifts would not be so substantial without the contribution of the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States. We welcome that trend, which confirms the efforts of the Governments and peoples of the African States to take responsibility for the fate of their own continent.

We support the adoption by the Secretary-General of measures taken over the past year aimed at the peaceful settlement of the Middle East question. We support the six-sided talks in Beijing, aimed at bringing peace to the Korean Peninsula. We also support resolution of the Cyprus problem.

Most conflicts have their origin in situations of economic disparity — unemployment, low-level of education, poverty and disease. The alarming scale of hunger, poverty, illiteracy and epidemic diseases in the world provides a breeding ground for terrorist groups. Promoting economic and social progress is one of the best ways of ensuring peace and security on the planet. For that reason, it is important to achieve the development goals set out in the Millennium Declaration.

The attention of the international community is firmly focused on the achievements of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). We believe that the specialized agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, together with State donors, must take, in conjunction with the African Union and the Governments of African States, comprehensive measures in order to quickly achieve NEPAD goals. That would also be an important step in achieving the development goals of the Millennium Declaration.

We are convinced that, for further progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, it is necessary to develop cooperation between United Nations organs and the Bretton Woods institutions and to further develop potential of the multilateral financial institutions. It is important to continue the practice of holding joint meetings between the Economic and Social Council and the Bretton Woods institutions to discuss joint measures in order to resolve the vital economic, social and environmental issues of the day.

Finally, we should consider a strategic orientation for the 2004-2005 United Nations programme budget, aimed at achieving the Millennium Development Goals, which will be important in order to achieve results by 2005, when a review conference on the Millennium Declaration is planned, based on the consideration of the five-year comprehensive report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. Balestra (San Marino): First of all, let me thank the Secretary-General for the two exhaustive and effective reports on the work of the Organization and on the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. These reports make clear the progress made in every field of activity of the United Nations. It is now essential to determine which aspects must be given greater consideration in the future work of the General Assembly.

The ongoing globalization process, which started last century, has already brought a number of benefits to humankind, although the results obtained to date, especially in the fight against poverty and underdevelopment, are still far from meeting expectations.

Moreover, we face new and dangerous challenges. Along with economic and technological globalization, we are faced with the globalization of terrorism, organized crime, pandemics and pollution. All these factors represent a constant threat to the international community and to every individual. No human being is safe from terrorist attack; everyone is a potential victim of a new pandemic; no country can be sure to avoid hosting, directly or indirectly, organized crime; and there is nowhere in space, in the air, on land or in the water that is free from the risk of pollution or natural disaster.

San Marino shares the view of the Secretary-General when he identifies the strengthening of cooperation as the only instrument available to the international community to face and overcome these destructive aspects of globalization. Governments are responsible for the well-being of their own nationals. They must be aware that national policies and strategies are no longer sufficient to guarantee a prosperous future for their populations, and that they must act in a wider context, beyond national and regional borders. Today more than ever, the world needs multilateralism.

As the Secretary-General states in paragraph 61 of his report on the work of the Organization, terrorism "continues to pose a major threat to international peace and security", and we must continue to fight it at all times. The international community also needs to understand the causes of terrorism in order to be able to react in an efficient way and improve situations that lead to such a phenomenon. Terrorism is not the weapon of a particular region, culture, religion or socio-economic group. It is a strategy that originates in all civilizations and human societies.

While universal condemnation of terrorism has to remain firm and inflexible, the motivations behind terrorism must be analysed attentively in their own specific context. The respect of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law remains essential in the fight against terrorism. In no circumstances can those principles can be abandoned, not even in time of war.

The prevention and resolution of conflicts and the provisions of assistance to populations emerging from conflicts remains one of the most exacting commitments of the Organization. As recalled by the Secretary-General, the resolution recently adopted by the General Assembly on the prevention of armed conflict gives the United Nations a strong mandate not only to continue but also to expand and intensify its conflict-prevention activities. San Marino believes that more resources should be allocated to programmes and projects aimed at the prevention of conflicts. A system to strengthen international cooperation should be implemented in countries at risk. The United Nations should have the capacity immediately to intervene. History teaches us that disagreements can deteriorate over time and lead to insoluble conflicts.

It is very difficult to evaluate the results obtained by this Organization in this important field of action. United Nations failures are very visible, but the successes achieved in the implementation of conflict-prevention measures often are not sufficiently highlighted, as they seem obvious to us. But that is a mistake, as they risk being taken for granted.

Unfortunately, it seems evident that the international community is more interested in facing the tragic consequences of armed conflicts than in trying to foresee and avert them. It is in the global interest to reverse that trend. To address only the tragic dramatic consequences of a war and not to have tried to avert it is ethically unacceptable and much more costly. We have to reject the old saying that states that "it is more difficult to find money to buy the medicine than it is to buy the coffin".

The development of a conflict-prevention policy must become an effective priority for the United Nations through the strengthening of international dialogue, the creation of adequate mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of conflicts, and the constant monitoring of international commitments.

San Marino has always supported the programme of reforms of the Secretary-General and welcomes the great improvements made to our Organization, with a

view to making it more active and more efficient. The commitment shown by the Secretary-General should be shown also by Member States. Our Governments should carry out the programme of reforms. San Marino believes that a reform of the General Assembly's working methods remains an essential element in guaranteeing the efficiency of the United Nations. My delegation has put forward some concrete proposals, and it is ready to cooperate with the ad hoc Working Group so that the General Assembly can reacquire the importance given to it by the Charter.

The best way to strengthen the Organization is to disseminate knowledge of its work throughout the world. Unfortunately, national and local media do not devote enough attention to the activities of the United Nations, and even less to those of the General Assembly. Often our Organization is considered as consisting only of the Security Council. Too often the important activities of the General Assembly are given only a marginal role or even ignored. It is vital to emphasize the opportunity to ensure a more effective diffusion of information on the results of the work of the General Assembly. We cannot underestimate the importance of this organ — the most representative in the United Nations.

In this respect, I would like to express my appreciation for the new operational model and the new organizational structure of the Department of Public Information, which will help to increase its capacity to deliver news and to enhance the image of the United Nations in the world.

Mr. Heinbecker (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Canada wishes fully to associate itself with the statement on this agenda item made by Australia, on behalf of Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

My delegation has some additional comments to offer on one issue that is of profound concern to the Canadian Government.

During the past decade we have witnessed horrors which have made a mockery of our repeated declarations of "never again". The international community stood aside as innocent civilians in Rwanda and Srebrenica were slaughtered.

(*spoke in English*)

If the United Nations is to be relevant in future — and seen to be relevant by the peoples for whom the Charter was written — then it cannot avert its eyes from such atrocities because some of us here insist on a narrow interpretation of sovereignty.

Mr. Fall (Senegal), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Let us be clear. Military intervention is very rarely justifiable. But when Governments cannot or will not protect the lives of their people, which is their most formal, primordial duty, or when they themselves are the perpetrators of atrocities against their own people, then the responsibility to protect those people falls, temporarily, to the international community.

As we look ahead to the reform of the United Nations, its mission and its architecture, as proposed by the Secretary-General, we must, as he himself has emphasized, come to grips with this most critical of issues. Nothing less than the integrity of the United Nations and its future depends on our doing so.

Mr. Talbot (Guyana): My delegation commends the Secretary-General for his reports and for his statement to the General Assembly on 23 September on the work of the Organization. The reports paint a chequered picture of progress and setbacks in addressing the challenges facing the United Nations and the wider international community in the quest for a more peaceful, prosperous and just world. We concur broadly with the Secretary-General's analysis of the current threats to peace and development.

Several of those threats are of immediate concern to Guyana and the wider Caribbean Community. Among them are those posed by the illicit flow of small arms, the illicit trade in narcotic drugs and disquieting new patterns of criminality. These, coupled with more fundamental dangers generated by persistent poverty, unemployment, inadequate social safety nets and an unfavourable external economic environment, pose serious challenges to democracy and stability in the region. Preventive action is therefore necessary to avert the encroachment of social and political instability on our societies.

The threats to which I have referred affect our countries, in large measure, as part of a wider network of challenges facing our hemisphere and the rest of the world. International terrorism remains a danger to world peace and security, and indeed to development. It must be addressed through the cooperation of all States. My Government, despite limited resources, has striven to fulfil its obligations under Security Council resolution 1373 (2001). International support remains critical to the success of our efforts. The constructive approach of the Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee is to be encouraged. Our ongoing struggle against this scourge must be informed by a thorough

understanding of all factors that contribute to it, including its root causes.

While our region is fortunate to have been spared the worst horrors of internecine strife and civil war, we remain deeply troubled by the suffering that has been visited on peoples of other regions as a result of conflict. In many of those instances, the victims have been innocent civilians, mainly women and children. At the same time, we are encouraged by the progress being made in Africa to resolve conflicts, which have ravaged the continent, and to re-establish conditions for durable peace and development through the African Union and instruments such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development. The role being played by African countries themselves in that process is to be commended; their efforts deserve the unstinting support of the international community. In the light of this and other experience, Guyana notes the continuing value of the role of regional organizations and mechanisms in the promotion of international peace and development. We welcome the ongoing cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations.

Three years after the adoption of the historic Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2), the results to date, as well as the prospects for the future, are decidedly mixed. The fight against poverty remains our most formidable challenge. We are told that, on average, the international community — by dint of the progress being recorded in a few large countries — stands a chance of achieving the goal of halving poverty by 2015. At the same time, the Secretary-General notes that the picture is much more troubling at the national level, with 37 of the 67 countries for which data are available experiencing increased poverty rates in the 1990s.

We share the Secretary-General's concern over the lack of progress in reversing the rate of the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. The need for access to medicines and care at affordable costs — particularly for those living with HIV/AIDS in developing countries — cannot be overemphasized. The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria is an important instrument that needs resources adequate to meet the challenge. We urge the international community to increase contributions to the Fund.

Debt relief, official development assistance and trade represent essential elements of the global partnership for development, the eighth Millennium Development Goal, which is critical to achievement of the Goals. However, the persistent debt burden borne by many developing countries, the inadequacy of flows of official development assistance and the uncertainties that bedevil the world trading system currently militate against achievement of the Goals. The prompt provision of debt relief under the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative is therefore a major key to progress, as is the full implementation of the official development assistance commitments made at Monterrey and Johannesburg.

The failure of the recent World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference in Cancún shows that the international community is still far from honouring the commitments made in Doha to place development and the interests of developing countries at the centre of the WTO negotiations. On the other hand, it affords an opportunity to refocus efforts on consolidating the vital link between trade and development. In that regard, we believe that the United Nations can and must play a key role through the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development and the process leading up to the eleventh United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XI).

I should like to quote from the conclusion of the Secretary-General's report on the work of the Organization:

> "Despite its imperfections, the United Nations still embodies the hopes of the peoples of the world for a peaceful and just world." (*A/58/1, para. 248*)

Events over the past year have confirmed that there is no viable alternative to the United Nations. That is especially the case for small countries such as my own, for which the United Nations remains indispensable to the promotion of peace and development. The increasing interdependence of countries and peoples in this era of globalization only serves to underscore the need to strengthen multilateralism and international cooperation.

In that regard, I wish to reiterate what the President of Guyana said in his address to the Assembly on 25 September 2003, during the just concluded general debate:

> "The success of international cooperation, and indeed of the United Nations system, will be determined by how well they respond to the interests and concerns of not only the powerful, but also the powerless, and not only of the rich

but, most urgently, of the poor." (*A/58/PV.12, p. 4*)

My delegation is of the firm view that the aspirations of humanity for peace, security and development will not be fulfilled without the effective participation of all States in global affairs. The application of democratic principles — which, happily, has increasingly become the norm within countries — must be extended to the international councils that shape our common destiny. We therefore strongly endorse the Secretary-General's call for a greater role for developing countries in global decision-making. That will require a more fundamental reform of the Organization — and indeed of the entire multilateral system — than we have seen so far.

In this connection, we note with interest the Secretary-General's proposal to establish a high-level panel of eminent personalities. We trust that the panel will be broadly representative of diverse experiences and perspectives, including those of small States. It must be noted, however, that there is no substitute for the political will of Member States to take the decisions that are needed to make the multilateral system accommodative of and adequate for present realities. The Assembly, therefore, should not relent in the search for ways to strengthen its role and the role of the Organization as a whole, in keeping with the Charter.

I conclude by recalling the statement of Assembly President, Julian Hunte, at the opening of the fifty-eighth session, when he spoke of a desire that this session be an action-oriented one in which decisions are implemented. Guyana shares his commitment to action and will support his efforts in that regard. We are conscious that the action required of this Assembly must go beyond the mere adoption of resolutions and declarations, or even of programmes of action. The full and effective implementation of the commitments made at the Millennium Summit and the series of United Nations Conferences and Summits are now of paramount importance. It is incumbent on us all to devise the mechanisms and mobilize the means necessary to transform our agreed objectives into tangible reality for the peoples of the world.

Mr. Butagira (Uganda): Let me first congratulate the President on his important assumption of the presidency of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly and to pledge Uganda's support for his presidency.

I commend the Secretary-General for the excellent report. Because of the time limitation, I will comment on only a few matters.

The United Nations, under the Charter, has the primary responsibility for maintaining peace and security. Uganda supports measures to strengthen its role in this area, in particular with respect to the proposal for a panel of experts to address itself on current security threats and the best use of collective action to respond to them.

In order to address conflicts, including preventive measures, especially on the African continent, we call for the strengthening of regional and subregional organizations so that they will build their capacities to respond quickly to crises. The United Nations would act best by acting through such organizations. It also gives responsibility to these organizations to manage the conflicts.

On peacekeeping, Uganda welcomes the robust mandate given to the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) under Chapter VII of the Charter to deal with the conflict in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of Congo, especially Ituri and the Kivus. We also pledge our total support to the Transitional Government in Kinshasa. By having a functional State in that part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, our security concerns will be addressed. In this regard, full support should be given to the United Nations — and the African Union-sponsored conference on the Great Lakes region to be held in Tanzania in June next year.

Terrorism must be fought, as it threatens all nations without exception. We all have experienced embarrassing and dehumanizing searches at airports because of terrorist threats. All the money and resources devoted to fighting terrorism would otherwise be channelled to implementing the Millennium Development Goals. We therefore support the Counter-Terrorism Committee in this regard. We call on the international community to help nations that have been victims of terrorist attacks, like Uganda, to build capacity and to make resources available to respond effectively to terrorist threats.

Building a global partnership for development has been a central focus for Uganda. As a Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC), we are addressing issues of trade, through specific policies, focusing on the flow of aid and elaborating macroeconomic policies

that have ensured the progress of Uganda in the area of debt relief, in order to reach the HIPC decision point.

As the Secretary-General mentioned in his report, we are using debt relief proceeds to expand primary education in line with the Millennium Development Goals. However, we are still confronted with some difficulties that slow down our progress.

The decline in commodity prices and agricultural subsidies by developed countries, among other factors, undercut our efforts to keep the debt-to-export ratios below 150 per cent, in line with the Millennium Development Goals.

On the Monterrey Consensus, we agreed on the principle of ownership. Poverty eradication is at the heart of Uganda's development agenda. We have evolved, with the support of international donors, a comprehensive Poverty Eradication Action Plan to tackle poverty in all its aspects. We need increased resources to continue implementing the programme, in keeping with the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. Official development assistance (ODA), therefore, remains an important facet of our development process, and we call upon our partners to fulfil their commitments and to increase ODA to 0.7 per cent of their gross national product.

Uganda is committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and, with the support of our development partners, we intend to keep the current momentum going.

Mr. Chidumo (Mozambique): My delegation is pleased to participate in this important debate of the General Assembly on the work of the Organization and the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. We welcome the report of the Secretary-General on these critical subjects, as well as the statement he made at the beginning of the general debate. Both the report and the statement offer comprehensive assessments of the situation in which the United Nations currently finds itself, the challenges before the Organization and recommendations on the way forward.

The United Nations has been at a crossroads during the recent past. Once again, the Organization has been tested by ever increasing demands and challenges, comprised of a multiplicity of tasks performed in several areas, including peace and security, economic and social development, human rights and humanitarian assistance, international law and the environment.

Recent events in the area of peace and security have brought additional challenges to the United Nations and multilateralism. The climate of global consensus and cooperation in the fight against terrorism, reflect in Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), which forged the international community's resolve to collectively fight terrorism and place the United Nations at the forefront of global action, has been tested by new challenges to multilateralism and collective security.

On the other hand, progress in the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, particularly of the Millennium Development Goals, has been slow, casting a shadow over the timely achievement of these goals. The Secretary-General notes in his report that,

> "in the area of peace and security, in particular, the consensus expressed or implied in the Declaration now looks less solid than it did three years ago. In the area of development, by contrast, a stronger consensus has been forged, but grave doubts remain as to whether Member States are sufficiently determined to act on it. And in the area of human rights and democracy there is a danger that we may retreat from some of the important gains made in the previous decade". (*A/58/323, para. 3*)

With the necessary political will, these issues can be addressed. We therefore must do everything we can to reverse this disturbing course of events, in particular in the issue of conflict prevention, management and resolution.

In Africa, it has been recognized that conflicts continue to undermine efforts towards sustainable development in the continent, but it has also been recognized that we Africans step by step are steadily discharging our responsibilities for the maintenance of peace and stability in the continent. This is particularly relevant given the fact that almost all conflicts afflicting Africa today are a continuation of old conflicts which have not been resolved properly over time or are seemingly new ones whose root causes are linked or might be traced back to those that have not been settled yet. This suggests that, once the current conflicts are addressed, the continent will be on the right path towards development and implementation of Millennium Development Goals.

The entry into force of the Peace and Security Council, an important organ of the African Union that will deal with issues related to conflict prevention,

management and resolution, will undoubtedly contribute to the collective efforts under way in our continent. Accordingly, the international community must continue to focus on the principle of collectively and swiftly addressing new and old, hard and soft threats to international peace and security as a whole.

Though we recognize that priority can be accorded to one group of threats at a given time, history reminds us that failure to act globally against threats to peace in all their forms and manifestations may ultimately affect our common security agenda. Therefore, our security agenda should continue to reflect the global nature of these threats. Our collective security agenda will be successful if it is pursued through the United Nations. For these reasons, we must strengthen the United Nations, particularly the General Assembly, in order to enable it to regain the confidence of Member States and of world public opinion at large.

The much-sought reforms of the Organization must be seen within this perspective. The current composition of the Security Council remains hostage to the past and fails to reflect the geopolitical realities of the twenty-first century. In particular, it fails to provide adequate qualitative and quantitative representation of developing countries in that critical organ of the United Nations. Therefore, unless this matter is addressed, the decisions of the Council will continue to be seen as reflecting mainly the interests of those who have benefited from its current composition. Member States are urged to show leadership by deciding on this matter, which has been on their agenda for more than a decade. We should not blame the General Assembly for ineffectiveness and redundancy on issues that only Member States can resolve.

The General Assembly, a democratic body that reflects the full membership of the United Nations, has been seeing its powers increasingly undermined. Important issues are discussed and resolutions adopted mostly on a lowest-common-denominator basis, consequently commanding little or no attention beyond the confines of the General Assembly Hall. The United Nations and the General Assembly in particular can only be what Member States want them to be. Therefore, the blame for the performance and relevance of the General Assembly and other organs of the United Nations lies entirely with Member States, and no reform can change that if the minds of those who can decide appear to be set to obstruct the very work we are all supposed to emulate.

The implementation of Millennium Development Goals in their entirety remains the most important task before the United Nations. We are particularly disturbed by current trends that show that many developing countries lag far behind in this noble task and that, at the prevailing pace, they will be unable to meet these Goals. Global implementation of the Goals requires strong global partnership and cooperation among all countries of the world. We urge the international community to provide the necessary support to developing countries, in particular the least developed, including adequate levels of official development assistance and foreign direct investment, to allow those countries to board the plane of socio-economic development.

We commend the Secretary-General for his efforts to undertake reforms aimed at aligning the institution with that critical task. For developing countries, United Nations support for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals is of paramount importance. Therefore, we encourage the United Nations system to continue to support national Governments in their efforts to mainstream the Goals in national development strategies and programmes. Furthermore, the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals should take regional development strategies into account. In Africa, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) remains the framework for implementation of the Goals. It is for this reason that NEPAD must be implemented and that pledges for support by our development partners should be met and on time.

We also commend the overall efforts of the Secretary-General to put the Organization at the service of its Member States. The ongoing reforms have been instrumental in placing the Organization at the forefront of the battle to eradicate poverty and fight HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases. For United Nations institutional reforms to be successful, they must strive to translate General Assembly decisions into reality. For instance, the allocation of resources to United Nations programmes and bodies should be in accordance with priorities set out by the General Assembly. On the other hand, there is a need to equip the Organization with the best available staff. In these efforts, and given the assumption that new recruitments will be made, due attention and priority should be given to candidates from unrepresented and underrepresented countries, as envisaged in relevant General Assembly resolutions.

The United Nations remains the only legitimate global organization that commands wide international recognition, legitimacy, confidence and respect. As President Chissano said in his recent address to this body,

> "it is through the United Nations that we can all find the much-sought legitimacy of action in tackling issues of common concern, including threats to peace and security, and in addressing the challenges of sustainable development and HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other infectious diseases". (*A/58/PV.9, p.4*)

There is no substitute for multilateral approaches and collective responsibility in addressing global challenges. Only through common and collective action can we ensure effectiveness and unity of purpose in enabling the United Nations to fulfil its obligations under the Charter.

Mr. Wang Guangya (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his reports on the work of the Organization and on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. The reports have reviewed the work in different areas carried out by our Organization over the past year and highlighted the challenges still facing us. They also contain many thought-provoking ideas. We need to give further careful study and in-depth consideration to the two reports. I now wish to make the following remarks in connection with the two reports.

The first concerns the role of the United Nations. In his report on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, the Secretary-General pointed out that the collective security mechanism is the best response to both old and new challenges. That view is undoubtedly shared by the vast number of Member States. During the general debate of the current session, almost all countries have affirmed the irreplaceable role played by the United Nations in today's world affairs and the need to maintain and strengthen it. Developments in the international situation over the past year have proved once again that a multilateral approach, with the United Nations at its core, cannot be cast aside if we are to remove various kinds of security threats facing the world and achieve common development. It is in the common interests of all countries to safeguard the authority of the United Nations. Under the current circumstances, we should continue to adhere to and earnestly implement the purposes and principles of the Charter and make active endeavours to enhance democracy and the rule of law in international relations.

China supports the United Nations efforts to conduct the necessary and appropriate reforms so as to keep pace with the times. These reforms should be aimed at improving the efficiency of our Organization and increasing its capacity to respond to various challenges and promote economic and social development, thus better enabling the United Nations to meet the needs of the twenty-first century. We welcome the proposal of the Secretary-General to establish a high-level panel of eminent personalities. The Chinese delegation will continue in a constructive manner to take an active part in discussions on reform of the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

My second remark concerns peace and security. As is stated in the work report, the past year has been a trying one for the United Nations. The war in Iraq at the beginning of the year posed a serious challenge to the collective security mechanism represented by the United Nations. Though the war has come to an end, peace is still a distant prospect. We hope to see the restoration of security and stability in Iraq and the resumption of the exercise of sovereignty by the Iraqi people at an early date. We are in favour of adopting a new resolution by the Security Council that is effective and supported by all sides. The resolution should set a timetable for the political process in Iraq and explicitly state the important role to be played by the United Nations.

The situation between Israel and Palestine remains a source of concern. The peace process over the past year has witnessed ups and downs. The history of the Middle East has shown that to counter violence with violence will only lead to a dead end. Negotiations and dialogue are the only way out. We urge Israel and Palestine to stop the violence and all acts that may increase the tension, resume talks as early as possible and create conditions for continued implementation of the road map.

In Africa, positive progress has been made in the settlement of such questions as the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia. However, it is still a long-term and arduous task to achieve peace in some areas of Africa. The international community should attach greater importance to the conflicts in Africa and provide stronger support to peacekeeping operations there.

We are still confronted by terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. An effective solution requires consistent measures that can tackle their root cause. Greater efforts through international cooperation should also be made on the basis of the purposes and principles of the Charter.

My third remark concerns development. To achieve coordinated, balanced and common development in the world and to attain lasting peace and stability, it is vital to implement the Millennium Development Goals. I would like to share my views with you on this question.

First, globalization should be managed and geared towards universal enjoyment of benefits by all countries through their participation. The United Nations should actively accelerate reforms, improve the international financial system, establish a more open and fair multilateral trade system, reinforce its role of coordination in the field of development and promote the right of participation and decision-making of the developing countries.

Secondly, the United Nations should give priority to development and make efforts to establish a culture of development, strengthen development agencies and ensure development funds. The United Nations should make financial aid, technology transfer, capacity-building, market access and poverty elimination key areas of cooperation and strengthen cooperation and participation among the Government, private sector and civil society so as to implement development goals in a comprehensive and balanced manner.

Thirdly, the key to accelerating the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals lies in a fair and reasonable evaluation framework. That framework should evaluate the progress in different countries and supervise and assess the fulfilment of the development aid commitment. We support the proposals made by the Secretary-General on encouraging the developed countries to set a timetable for fulfilling their commitments on trade, debt relief and aid. We also support the United Nations in holding an important conference in 2005 to comprehensively evaluate the progress in implementing the Millennium Development Goals.

My fourth remark concerns public health. In the first half of this year, the outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in some regions and countries shows once again that all countries should make continued efforts to consolidate public health undertakings. The international community should strengthen cooperation to improve the global emergency mechanism. We call on all countries to support the incorporation of global public health capacity-building in United Nations development programmes and other plans and to enhance international and regional cooperation. The Chinese delegation will submit a draft resolution on this question at the current General Assembly session. We hope that it will enjoy support from all countries.

As the President rightly pointed out at the opening session, the current General Assembly session is faced with many challenges and arduous tasks. The Chinese side supports his vision for the work of the current session and agrees with him that the General Assembly should be action-oriented. The Chinese delegation supports the strengthened authority and role of the United Nations and the General Assembly and will take an active part in the working group on the revitalization of the General Assembly. We believe that the current General Assembly session will achieve positive results through concerted efforts.

Mr. Muñoz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me, first of all, Sir, to ask you to convey just how pleased we are to see the outstanding diplomat from Saint Lucia, representing the Caribbean, preside over the present General Assembly for a year.

The Secretary-General has submitted to us an important report on the implementation of the Millennium Goals, whose conclusions deal with the critical question of strengthening our multilateral institutions, and in which the Secretary-General offers a few thoughts on the limitations that he has observed with respect to the main organs of the Organization.

In the same vein, in his address in the general debate, Mr. Kofi Annan went a step further and said that it was his intention to establish a commission that, among other things, would make recommendations on the interaction of the organs of the United Nations and how to strengthen the Organization with proposals for reform. In other words, the Secretary-General is doing his job, and it is now time for us, as the representatives of Member States, to do ours.

The United Nations is in urgent need of renewal. That diagnosis is broadly shared. The great challenge is to agree on the necessary changes for the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Trusteeship Council. That need for renewal has become even more evident in the wake of 11 September 2001 and the Iraq crisis. Power relations and security priorities have changed

dramatically in the last few years. New global threats such as terrorism and pandemics can be dealt with effectively only by means of a multilateral approach. But if strengthening multilateralism is critical for dealing with conflicts and challenges, both old and emerging ones, it is essential that the United Nations renew itself in order to adapt to the new circumstances.

That diagnosis is neither original nor new; the shelves of the United Nations are replete with proposals and initiatives for reform that have languished in the labyrinth of bureaucracy, because they ceased to be priority issues, fell victim to political inaction or served merely to score talking points without operational consequences.

That is why the Presidents of Chile, Mexico, other countries of our region and other like-minded States have, in various forums, underscored the need for a new approach to the renewal of the United Nations. Chile thus agrees with the Secretary-General's proposal to create a panel of eminent personalities to address this issue, a panel whose work can be supported by a group of like-minded countries that are proponents of reform.

What changes are needed? In our opinion, the Security Council, whose reform is probably the most complex, needs to be expanded to make it more democratic and more representative of today's international community, without undermining its effectiveness. Today the Council meets more frequently than it did during the cold war, but it still does not reflect the realities of power of the twenty-first century. Moreover, despite the evident desire of permanent members to perhaps keep their veto power intact, that privilege must be at least modified in order to limit its use to exceptional circumstances.

The General Assembly has clearly suffered a marked deterioration in its status as a political organ. Part of the problem is the long list of repetitive resolutions that serve only very narrow objectives and which are almost never implemented. Another problem is the broad agenda and the extremely long annual sessions. As Member States, we have been remiss in not implementing consensus resolutions whose objective is to remedy some of those problems, particularly the problem of the agenda.

The Economic and Social Council must have closer and more effective coordination with the Security Council in the areas of conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction. Secondly, it must have a closer, improved working relationship with the Bretton Woods institutions. Thirdly, it is important that the Economic and Social Council strengthen its role as coordinator of the programmes and agencies of the United Nations system that are within its area of competence, as well as its relationship with its subsidiary organs such as the Commission on Human Rights and the Commission on Sustainable Development. In that regard, the ideas proposed by the current President of the Economic and Social Council, Ambassador Gert Rosenthal of Guatemala, deserve the careful study of Council members.

One aspect of reform that is not often dealt with concerns the decision-making mechanisms of United Nations organs. The obsessive search for consensus often results in decisions of the lowest common denominator, which means decisions of scant relevance and effectiveness in the world outside the United Nations, to which, in the end, those agreements are directed. The reform process should include a study of this problem because, while consensus is always advisable, good decisions must not be sacrificed in the exclusive interest of consensus.

The changes I have just mentioned are easier to enumerate than to implement. The renewal of the United Nations must be a complete package, a collective undertaking in which all Members gain something and in which nothing is concluded until everything has been negotiated in a single undertaking. Perhaps some countries will obtain more in some areas than in others, but no country should come out empty-handed at the conclusion of the process.

What is certain is that this is the right time — and the situation is ripe — for a bold, decisive and high-level political initiative, in which, in the end, all the actors participating in the United Nations — Member States, the Secretariat and civil society — emerge as winners.

Mr. Nakkari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Today, we are debating the reports of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/58/1) and on implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration (A/58/323) and — on the one hand looking back on the achievements of the Organization and the challenges it has faced and, on the other hand, looking ahead to the future hope of implementing the outcomes of the Millennium Summit.

Hopes are dreams mixed with optimism. However, a realistic examination of the events of last year leads us to pause and reflect on challenges that are unprecedented in the history of our Organization. To

quote the Secretary-General's report on the Millennium Summit, "This climate of cooperation and consensus was seriously eroded by the war against Iraq" (*A/58/323, para. 6*). The consensus on peace and security achieved in the Millennium Declaration is now less solid than it was three years ago, as the Secretary-General also notes in the same report.

More than half a century after the creation of the Organization, storms continue to rage. We are witnessing occupation, aggression, the violation of international law, the use of the logic of force to coerce others and the flagrant violation of sovereignty, as well as poverty, ignorance, underdevelopment, illiteracy, hunger, terrorism, disease, pandemics and local conflicts — all of them the result of human actions — to say nothing of the natural disasters that have struck many parts of the world.

Given such challenges, the demands and responsibilities that globalization imposes on the international community are now greater than ever. We live in a world in which the media can reach into our homes, making people better able to understand the suffering of others. This obliges the world's decision makers to be more just and to respect equality, justice and international law. The worldwide rejection of the war against Iraq is perhaps the best example of that.

Even as we try to give globalization a more human face, the failure to make the most of the scientific and technical advances of the past two decades will surely lead to greater poverty and feelings of injustice and inequity among the peoples of the world. As the Secretary-General states in his report on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, the central challenge we face today is to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world's people.

At Monterrey, all parties agreed that it was important for the Governments of developing countries to adopt national development strategies and for countries with economies in transition to maximize their economies with the utmost effectiveness. The Open-ended Working Group on Financing for Development, however, has stated that, even if developing countries adopt sound policies and succeed in maximizing their local resources, it is likely that they will still need at least a further $50 billion in assistance if development goals are to be achieved.

Although the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration refers to pledges of greater assistance from the developed countries to the developing countries, we believe that, if the system of international trade is not reformed, that will simply amount to giving with the left hand and taking with the right. The Secretary-General was correct to stress the vital need for a more comprehensive multilateral agreement that gives developing countries greater access to markets and eliminates the tariffs and other obstacles created by developed countries. The Secretary-General also made clear that in the absence of such a comprehensive agreement, developing countries have no real chance of furthering their economic growth.

Our region has suffered for decades from campaigns based on injustice, misinformation and misconceptions. The Israeli policy of aggression and occupation, which is continuing, is the principal cause of the suffering of our region. As the Secretary-General's report states, Palestinians continue to suffer at unprecedented levels, while the policies of closure and curfew have led to the paralysis of the economy and have pushed 1.3 million Palestinians below the poverty line. Furthermore, Israel has carried out a number of military operations that have destroyed the homes of thousands of Palestinians.

In this context, I must recall that some 500,000 Syrians have been displaced from the occupied Syrian Golan — expelled by force by the Israeli occupation forces from their homes, which were then taken over. Furthermore, Israel is still causing great suffering in other countries in the region, including Lebanon, whose air space it is continuing to violate.

The cowardly attack by Israel against Ein Saheb in Syria on 5 October was a clear violation of the most important principles of the Charter. It was a threat to regional and international peace and security, as well as a violation of the Agreement on Disengagement between Israeli and Syrian forces, welcomed in Security Council resolution 350 (1974).

In this regard, we welcome the statement made on 5 October by the Secretary-General strongly denouncing the Israeli air strike against Syrian territory and expressing his particular concern that this additional escalation comes at an already difficult and tense moment, and will likely have repercussions that exacerbate the dispute in the Middle East and further threaten regional peace and security.

In this regard, it is appropriate that the Secretary-General's report on the work of the Organization should state that the ultimate objective of the peace process as a whole remains the comprehensive

settlement of the Middle East conflict, including on the Israeli-Syrian track and the Israeli-Lebanese track, based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the principle of land for peace and the terms of the Madrid Peace Conference of 1991 and other agreements reached by the parties, as well as the peace initiative endorsed at the Beirut Summit of the League of Arab States in March 2002.

Hope has not failed us, however. We must all shoulder our responsibilities with courage, because the grave challenges that threaten the very foundations of this Organization — which was created to ensure international peace and security — require world leaders to make sincere efforts and demonstrate sound political will. As the Secretary-General recalled in his report on implementation of the Millennium Declaration, the fundamental authority of the United Nations stems from the fact that its legitimacy is founded on the principles of international law. There is no substitute for such legitimacy, and the actual conduct of international affairs must be in conformity with those principles.

We agree with the Secretary-General that the Security Council's ability to mobilize the broadest possible support for its resolutions and actions will be strengthened if the Council is seen as representing the widest possible cross-section of the international community. We must have democracy in international relations.

In conclusion, as the Secretary-General states in his report on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, the Charter remains the essential foundation for the legitimacy of any action at the international level.

Ms. Corkery (United States of America): Today's discussion reflects streamlining in action. We will address both the Secretary-General's report on the work of the Organization and his report on follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit. The two are closely linked. In the reports Secretary-General Annan addresses how the United Nations is to regain "the confidence of States and of world public opinion" by demonstrating "its ability to deal with the most difficult issues ... effectively." (*A/58/323, para. 13*)

The United States delegation, along with others, listened attentively to the Secretary-General's address, his "report to shareholders", delivered on 23 September. Subsequently, President George W. Bush stated in this Hall that the United States "As an original signer of the United Nations Charter ... is committed to the United Nations and we show that commitment by working to fulfil the United Nations stated purposes and by giving meaning to its ideals." (*A/58/PV.7, p. 12*)

That commitment is manifested in our work with the Secretariat and other Member States to increase the effectiveness, efficiency and accountability of the United Nations. The United States has been among the leading advocates of United Nations management reform, which includes working to implement results-based budgeting and phasing down — or sunsetting — redundant and obsolete programmes. Only in this way can the United Nations fulfil membership priorities and mandates. The Secretary-General's report — and, indeed, the performance of the Organization — positively reflect many of these reforms. Member States should be encouraged by these changes in the Organization.

The United States supports making the United Nations even more effective, efficient and accountable. We are working with our colleagues to rethink and reinvigorate the role of the United Nations, particularly in economic and social matters. One way to do this is through thoughtful implementation of resolution 57/270 on integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields. The credibility of United Nations policy-making bodies is undermined if the outcomes of these conferences and summits are not fully integrated into the work of the United Nations.

The Secretary-General highlights the United Nations efforts to address extreme poverty at the global, regional and national levels, and reports "good progress" by the United Nations system, including the specialized agencies, in achieving "greater coherence in their policies and programmes" and in "improving the efficiency and impact of the support they provide at the country level." (*A/58/1, para. 106*)

We welcome, in particular, the Secretary-General's creation of the Commission on Private Sector and Development, which is to develop strategic recommendations on how to promote a strong, indigenous private sector in developing countries. The newly established Financing for Development Office in the Secretariat will have an important role to play in promoting activities that will accelerate the process of implementing the Monterrey Consensus and integrating the outcome of the groundbreaking Monterrey Conference into the work of the United Nations. This year the United States has contributed $500,000 to the

Office for activities in support of the Monterrey Consensus.

The United States applauds the Secretary-General for his support and energy in reorienting the Organization's work on sustainable development toward implementation and action. Last year's World Summit on Sustainable Development opened a new chapter in our common endeavour to transform words and commitments into concrete actions that make a difference. To that end, we welcome the Secretary-General's update stating that the Organization is finalizing its own inter-agency mechanisms for system-wide follow-up to that World Summit across the full range of issues. Ensuring that all relevant United Nations bodies are working in harmony and focusing their complementary skills and expertise on implementation is critical.

The United States strongly supports the Secretary-General's determination to increase the effectiveness and productivity of the United Nations activities to support Africa's development, as outlined in the Secretary-General's update on activities undertaken by United Nations agencies and programmes in support of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The United States fully supports NEPAD, which is a by-Africa, for-Africa initiative guided by the principles of good governance, open markets and respect for fundamental freedoms.

The NEPAD approach is consistent with the Monterrey Consensus, the Millennium Declaration and the World Summit on Sustainable Development. It is an approach that depends on concrete actions at the country and subregional levels. The United States initiatives to support peace, democracy and prosperity in Africa, including the Millennium Challenge Account, the United States Emergency Plan for HIV/AIDS Relief, the Africa Education Initiative and the African Growth and Opportunity Act are geared toward helping African nations that are helping themselves.

We concur with the Secretary-General on the importance of food assistance to Africa, and we are taking significant actions to meet the need. The United States continues to work with the World Food Programme and others to provide significant emergency assistance to Africa to address food crises. In 2003, we will provide $1.4 billion in global emergency food aid. The Famine Fund — a new presidential initiative — will make available $200 million for rapid response to food crises.

The Millennium Declaration represents the collective will of the international community to address the urgent need to fight poverty. The internationally agreed Development Goals in the Millennium Declaration represent clear, time-bound development targets. Success in achieving these goals depends on a partnership in which developing and developed countries focus on positive outcomes. The framework for this partnership was agreed by our leaders in Monterrey, Mexico, last year, at the Conference on Financing for Development.

The Monterrey Consensus gives us a practical framework in which to pursue effective development and to meet the ambitious agenda laid out in the Millennium Declaration. It shares the same underpinnings as the Millennium Declaration: political and economic freedom, sound governance and institutions, increasing human capacity through improved health and education and encouraging growth through free trade and private enterprise.

In his report on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, the Secretary-General stressed the importance of follow-through and political will. We concur with the Secretary-General. As President Bush stated on 23 September, "Our good intentions will be credited only if we achieve good outcomes". (*A/58/PV.7, p. 12*) The United States is following through on our commitments and taking action. We are deepening partnerships with countries that are committed to good governance, investing in their people, and free markets. The $5 billion Millennium Challenge Account, based on the principles of accountability and reward and emphasizing that responsibility for development lies in developing countries themselves, will increase core development assistance by 50 per cent over the next three years, resulting in more than a $5 billion annual increase over current levels in fiscal year 2006.

Mr. Kyaw Tint Swe (Myanmar), Vice-President, took the Chair.

On HIV/AIDS, President Bush's $15 billion emergency plan for AIDS relief is intended for 14 of the most affected countries in Africa and the Caribbean. Water is another area where the United States has taken the lead to produce good outcomes: in the United States Water for the Poor initiative, the United States has proposed total funding commitments for 2003 to 2005 of $510 million for water supply, sanitation and health services and nearly $400 million to promote improved watershed management.

We strongly support the Secretary-General's focus on women in political decision-making. As he noted, "women in many parts of the world continue to be excluded from decision-making at all levels of government, or are given only token representation" (*A/58/323, para. 83*). In an effort to address this grievous exclusion, the United States will introduce a draft resolution on women and political participation at this session of the General Assembly.

President Bush's statement to the General Assembly two weeks ago (see A/58/PV.7) underscored the commitment of the United States to ending the scourge of trafficking in persons and our strong interest in working with other countries and the United Nations system to that end. Our own efforts include an annual report on trafficking in persons as well as numerous programmes to assist other countries in the fight to end this tragic modern manifestation of slavery. Our efforts are aimed at prosecuting traffickers, protecting victims, preventing crimes at home and assisting other countries that are committed to doing the same. We will look for opportunities to advance our shared goals in this body.

Secretary-General Kofi Annan has set the stage for the Assembly's further discussion of United Nations reform and revitalization. He has rightly emphasized the need for the United Nations and its bodies to better achieve their original and intended purposes. For example, he reminds us — and we strongly concur — that in the human rights arena, Member States should appreciate that membership on the Commission on Human Rights "implies responsibilities as well as privileges" (*ibid., para. 78*).

The Secretary-General has also raised a number of other important and challenging questions that need to be seriously addressed by Member countries in the year ahead. Our comments on this topic are part of a broader discussion and call to action, which will continue later in this month when we look at United Nations reform proposals in detail, and during the work of the General Assembly's main committees.

Mr. Van den Berg (Netherlands): The report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration (A/58/323) is as crucial as it is courageous. On substance, he has raised the issues of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the threat of terrorism, the need for criteria for the use of pre-emptive force and the necessity to balance our response to the hard and the soft threats the world faces today. On organization, he challenged us on the adequacy of the intergovernmental system to tackle today's global agenda.

The Netherlands fully associates itself with the statement made by Italy. The European Union has made it clear that it is ready to engage on the full range of issues that the Secretary-General has put to us Member States. We take the floor to share our thoughts on three specific issues: pitfalls, timing and sequencing.

On pitfalls, the general debate made it clear that there is a momentum and a sense of urgency. Will this drive for reform last in the coming months? Let me cite three possible pitfalls that could derail our efforts. First, the Secretary-General has invited us to discuss a series of topics at the same time. Here we run the risk of progress in one area being made dependant on progress in other areas. We should not allow that to happen. We are invited to a game of simultaneous chess; we have to move our pieces on all the boards in the same game.

Secondly, the importance of the matter demands innovation and expeditiousness; it requires departure from our usual patterns of behaviour here in New York. If we allow old reflexes to creep in, we will find ourselves locked up in the usual exchange of arguments among regional groups. That would take the spirit out of the debate — and gone is the sense of momentum and importance. If that scenario becomes reality, we will all lose.

Thirdly, the panel of eminent persons can in no way present an excuse for the rest of us to sit back and wait. We would lose valuable time if we waited for the Secretary-General to report on the work of the panel. That would effectively mean the adjournment of reform to the next General Assembly. The panel's work and our work here in New York can happily coexist. In fact I expect both exercises to complement each other rather than to compete.

Timing is essential. Momentum has, by definition, a limited shelf life. The window of opportunity to shape the United Nations to meet our present needs will not be open forever. Looking ahead, September 2005 emerges as a natural deadline for our work. September 2005 can bring together development, the financing of development, security, human rights and the adequacy of the multilateral institutions. September 2005 can mean a truly comprehensive reappraisal of the multilateral system worthy of the optimistic and ambitious spirit of the Millennium

Summit, which by then will have taken place 5 years before.

If timing is essential, then sequencing in our work is even more so. If we accept September 2005 as a decisive milestone, we will have two General Assembly sessions at our disposal to do the work. Arguing backwards starting in September 2005, it seems probable that the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly will be devoted to discussions on the Secretary-General's proposals with the panel's report as one of the inputs.

We will have to prepare for that, meaning that we have to probe, to discuss and to speak our minds, within and among the regional groups. To make that happen, we should consider uncommon formats for our deliberations, for example the establishment of roundtables cutting across groups. Obviously, given our busy agenda for the coming three months the main thrust of this exploratory work will have to take place in the second half of this session, in the first part of 2004.

Still arguing backwards, I now come to what we can take up now. In the coming three months, three items on our agenda stand out on which we can demonstrate our genuine will to improve the system: the high-level dialogue on financing for development, the budget and the revitalization of the General Assembly.

On the high-level dialogue on financing for development, we will have to start building up towards the September 2005 event. On the budget, we will have to agree on a more streamlined budgetary process that channels funds to priorities and steers away from input-oriented micro-management by Member States. I strongly recommend that permanent representatives take a personal interest in that important debate. On the revitalization of the General Assembly, we will have to focus on specific issues on which progress is possible. Our suggestions are the strengthening of the office or the President, the revitalization of the General Committee, the restructuring of the agenda of the General Assembly, the role and impact of resolutions and the organization of work of the Main Committees. We will come back to these issues at the end of this month.

I know that this timetable is ambitious. I am fully aware that ambition can sometimes be met with cynicism, but I also happen to believe that cynicism is the lowest level of intellectual activity. Simple calculus demonstrates that, all missions added up, we have about 3000 kilograms of brains at our disposal. Let us put those brains to work to the full for the benefit of the United Nations and therefore for the benefit of "We the Peoples" we represent.

Mr. Ngo Duc Thang (Viet Nam): I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive reports and I concur with many of his analyses. His dedicated service to the Organization deserves our highest appreciation.

As rightly observed by the Secretary-General, the past year has really been a trying one for the United Nations. Indeed, challenges old and new have emerged with an ever-more expanded magnitude and complexity. While poverty and injustice persist, the events that took place during the year — such as the war in Iraq, growing violence in the Middle East and spreading terrorism — have cast very dark shadows on the various aspects of international life and on the work of the Organization.

In view of those challenges, the only way forward is for nations to work together in partnership and on the basis of the principles of the Charter and of international law. This requires us to work harder for the building of healthy, equitable international relations. Viet Nam fully shares this conviction and holds dear the principles of respect for national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of States.

Peace and development continue to be our primary tasks today. Recent developments have required us to focus our attention on working to maintain world peace, combat terrorism and resolve conflicts. We must, however, redouble our efforts for economic and social development and for poverty eradication.

In the current international trade climate, clearly the developing countries will always be the most disadvantaged. In particular, protectionist measures, including non-trade forms in the name of anti-dumping, continue to be imposed to prevent developing countries' products from entering developed countries' markets. This situation must be corrected through the building of a more democratic and open world trade and financial system, which would also ensure favourable conditions to the developing countries. We hope that the forthcoming high-level dialogue on financing for development at the end of the month will also take due account of these priorities.

The Goals set by the Millennium Summit have been our shared priorities ever since their inception. We welcome the progress made by the Organization and the efforts of the Secretary-General to map out the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. The fact is that we are still a long way from meeting the common needs and expectations.

The United Nations should therefore work more effectively and practically to accelerate the realization of those Goals. This will require a more effective and democratized United Nations. We therefore support the ongoing efforts towards those ends. We also welcome, in that regard, the decision by the Secretary-General to establish a high-level group to consider proposals for strengthening the Organization.

The reform of the United Nations should be guided by the principles of the Charter. In this exercise, it is imperative to ensure that the General Assembly assume its authoritative and political role as the universal, representative body and that the Security Council effectively discharge its functions and mandates in a manner that truly reflects the common will of the Organization's membership.

The solution of global issues today requires the combined efforts of all nations. A prominent message emerging from the general debate of this Assembly has been that of renewed commitment to multilateralism. In this context, the United Nations needs to play an important role in the fields of peace and development and in building healthy, equitable international relations.

Mr. De Santa Clara Gomes (Portugal): Portugal fully subscribes to the statement made by the representative of Italy on behalf of the European Union on the follow-up to the Millennium Summit and the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization. In particular, we support its call for Member States to show political will, pragmatism and imagination in the reform of the United Nations.

We welcome the Secretary-General's proposal to create a panel of eminent personalities as an important step towards overcoming the difficulties we have been facing in reforming this Organization. However, as the Permanent Representative of Italy said,

> "we must not put off until tomorrow what we can do today. We must push ahead with action on reforming this year". (*A/58/PV.23*)

The challenging dimension of the measures that need to be adopted and the different levels where action is required make it advisable to go forward as soon as possible in those areas where reform is most needed and pressing.

As the statement of the European Union affirms, one of our priorities is to consider how to improve cooperation between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council in order to enhance the effectiveness of the United Nations. Cooperation among the various United Nations organs is foreseen in the Charter as a necessary way of achieving common goals. The Secretary-General has been stressing the need to improve the coherence of the system and thus to transform it into a more effective instrument of the international community.

One of the areas where that cooperation is most needed is in the field of conflict prevention. Conflict prevention is one of the primary obligations set forth in the Charter. We must be fully aware that the usefulness of the United Nations will always be judged in terms of the Organization's capacity to avoid and handle conflicts.

In our view, conflict prevention has three fundamental dimensions: security, institution-building and development. Those three dimensions are closely intertwined; the failure of one places all the others in jeopardy.

The Security Council, besides its ongoing efforts in the field of security and peacekeeping, has recently, within the framework of a debate promoted by the British presidency, considered justice and the rule of law as essential elements for nation- and State-building and has explored ways to place greater emphasis on that dimension. The Economic and Social Council, for its part, has been trying to address the development component of conflict prevention through establishing ad hoc working groups for specific countries. We should encourage those positive trends and try to take further steps in the same direction.

My Prime Minister suggested in his statement before the General Assembly (see A/58/PV.8) that there is a solid case for advocating the creation of a new institutional mechanism: a new commission with a mandate to routinely monitor conflict-prevention cases and to promote the creation of conditions for peace and development. In conjunction with the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council, which would both maintain their respective areas of competence, and under a mandate given by them, that commission could identify and deal with the most pressing needs. It would also draw up for countries at risk — which are

the ones involved in most post-conflict situations — as well as in other clearly defined situations, integrated strategies linking the objectives of security, reinforcement of institutions in the fields of justice and administration, and economic and social development.

In order to create conditions for development, the commission would obviously need to be closely linked to the Bretton Woods institutions and United Nations agencies. International and donor aid will be more forthcoming if an integrated strategy is adopted with that kind of support. In terms of the United Nations budget, we think existing resources should be sufficient to cover the functioning of such a Commission.

I think this proposal should be considered and discussed in the context both of the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization and of the report on the implementation of the Millennium Goals. It addresses what we believe to be a widely felt need at this moment and proposes an instrument that would be very useful.

Mr. Listre (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): The events of the past year call into question the commitment made in the Millennium Declaration to share responsibility in tackling the threats against international peace and security by recourse to the multilateral tool embodied by this Organization.

That has led to deep division within the international community and has raised new questions about United Nations actions and about the principles on which the Organization was founded. This forces us to reflect sincerely and deeply on the future of multilateralism and the collective security system. This concept must reflect the global consensus on the main threats to international peace and security, as well as on the proper responses to them.

The sine qua non condition of multilateralism is that, in attaining their national interests, States must respect global realities and take into account the needs of others. Unless we find a collective response to collective problems, we will not be able to restore the confidence of States and world public opinion in this Organization. The legitimacy lent by the United Nations is its principal asset. However, that legitimacy must be complemented by a clear demonstration that collectively we can effectively tackle the most difficult issues and that international matters can be best resolved by everyone working together, not unilaterally.

Following the 11 September 2001 attacks, the United Nations demonstrated that it could act swiftly in order to establish collective mechanisms to fight terrorism. In the area of peacekeeping and peace-building too, it became clear that it is possible to effectively fulfil complex mandates and face the challenge of stabilizing conflict situations and help societies devastated by war in their transition to peace and democracy. The example of Timor-Leste is particularly relevant in that respect, as are the cases of Kosovo and Sierra Leone, among others.

In these and other areas, the United Nations can make significant contributions, and it has demonstrated the ability to adapt. By way of example, during the past few years, it has been proven that, in certain cases, it is necessary to establish peace and to stabilize a situation before a United Nations peacekeeping mission can be deployed. In such instances, the deployment of multinational forces has been the appropriate instrument, as in the cases of Timor-Leste, Afghanistan, Côte d'Ivoire, Bunia and elsewhere in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Liberia. We thank the countries and organizations that have led such efforts for their solidarity and for their interest in maintaining peace in those situations.

With regard to weapons of mass destruction, we agree with the Secretary-General that it is necessary to strengthen and supplement the existing regimes. In our view, the United Nations must expand its action in this area and adopt the measures necessary to prohibit the proliferation of these weapons by adopting clear measures that point out the consequences of non-compliance. These are actions that, as experience shows, can and should be carried out effectively in the multilateral framework of the United Nations. We value the work of the Secretary-General, whose report on this item has provided impetus in the sphere of conflict-prevention.

The General Assembly recently adopted resolution 57/337, aimed at including this issue in future action and calling on States and regions to develop strategies in that area. Activities aimed at putting in place a culture of structural conflict prevention throughout the system at the national, regional and international levels must be sustained and increased.

The great discouragement and outrage that we all felt as a result of the attack in Baghdad reminds us of the urgency of strengthening, as much as possible, everything pertaining to the security of United Nations

personnel. Such security requires practical measures and the elimination of the broad impunity still enjoyed by the criminals. That is why we wish that the Secretary-General, after expressing strong indignation at the attack in paragraph 3 of his report on the work of the Organization, had also noted the urgency of strengthening the current process aimed at broadening the implementation of the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations Personnel and Associated Personnel. I should add that that is an old concern of Argentina's that we expressed when we presided over the Security Council in February 2000.

It is encouraging that the principles of the protection of civilians have begun to be included in the mandates of a number of recent peacekeeping missions, and we support the Secretary-General's work to organize regional workshops to study humanitarian challenges, aimed at developing a regional perspective on the protection of civilians.

One field in which the work of the United Nations has been notable is that of the international protection of human rights. Recently, the General Assembly adopted the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (resolution 57/199, annex), and the International Criminal Court began to function a few months ago. Since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we have made progress in establishing a system to defend the dignity of the human person and to eliminate impunity for those who infringe it.

However, there remain divisions and contradictions in the full implementation of those norms and a misperception that through the United Nations there will be an attempt to impose on various countries values that are foreign to their culture, tradition and situation. In truth, we need to admit that there are basic international norms incumbent on all of us because they deal with inalienable human rights, and because the peace and stability that concern everyone depend on them. Thus, it is a very negative practice to group together in blocs in order to avoid facing glaring realities or to assert the principle of unrestricted sovereignty in order to avoid honouring commitments undertaken in front of the international community. We therefore support the process of reviewing the working methods of the Commission on Human Rights so as to reduce its politicization and enable it to focus on its essential mission of truly promoting and protecting human rights throughout the world.

Closely related to that subject is the issue of democracy, which — as the Secretary-General recalls — is a human right implied in article 21 of the Universal Declaration. The increasing global acceptance of the democratic paradigm is one of the most significant achievements of recent decades, despite the fact that some countries still resist it by arguing for different types of systems. We know that democracy — whatever its particularities — exists only where there is plurality of opinions and political parties and respect for internationally recognized rights and guarantees and for the constitutions of indisputably democratic countries, and where power comes from the exercise of the free vote by all citizens. Of course, many democracies languish because of social and economic difficulties and the poor quality and corruption of their leaders, but that can be resolved only with more, not less, participation by society in decision-making.

The United Nations has played an important role in the area of electoral assistance, guaranteeing that, in many cases, no frustration will be caused by an illegitimate election experience, leading to grave consequences for the political process. That is an aspect requiring continued attention and greater support from the international community.

The urgent threats to global security must not make us lose sight of necessary action with regard to development. We agree with the Secretary-General that there is at present a wide gap between the rhetoric of inclusion and the reality of exclusion. As the President of my country, Néstor Kirchner, stated a few days ago before the General Assembly: "Promoting ... development ... is no longer simply a matter of social conscience on the part of the central countries. It has an impact on their situation and security". (*A/58/PV.11, p. 7*)

Argentina supports the Organization's actions to follow up on the results of major development conferences. However, as one can see from the Secretary-General's recent report on follow-up to the Monterrey Summit (A/58/216), efforts by developing countries to carry out sound macroeconomic and fiscal policies do not dovetail with the attitude shown by developed countries at the recent Cancún meeting of the World Trade Organization. In that connection, we join in underscoring the vital importance of a successful round of international trade talks in revitalizing the economy and in strengthening the development process, enabling our countries to grow on the basis on genuine resources stemming from their

comparative advantages. We consider that the review of progress in implementing the Millennium Declaration commitments envisaged for 2005 could enable us to carry out a broad assessment, at a high-level event, of progress made in the processes of the major conferences of the 1990s.

In his report on follow-up to the Millennium Summit (A/58/323), the Secretary-General makes very interesting observations about the need to strengthen multilateral institutions and to thoroughly review their current architecture. My Government supports such efforts to build a more efficient and transparent Organization. Revitalization of the General Assembly is a key to the changes needed, and we assure the President of our cooperation so that we can make significant progress in our work this year.

We also support Security Council reform, but we need to establish unequivocally that it must take place only on the basis of consensus and democratization. It is not a question of increasing the number of privileged countries with permanent seats, which itself was an anomaly of the Organization's origins; to repeat it would be an error in terms of efficiency. On the contrary, we need to increase the number of non-permanent members from all regions to make the Security Council more representative and to enhance the legitimacy of its decisions by limiting the right of veto and establishing procedures aimed at greater transparency.

Argentina, as a founding country of the United Nations and despite the ups and downs of its national history, has always demonstrated a commitment to the Organization's cause. We take this opportunity to reaffirm our will to participate in this reform exercise with the objective of reaching a historic agreement soon that reflects a balance between individual interests and the general interest of ensuring peace, security and development for all.

Mr. Hachani (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): I wish on behalf of my delegation to thank the Secretary-General for his report on implementation of the Millennium Declaration (A/58/323), adopted by heads of State or Government from all over the world in September 2000. The report has the merit of having clearly and courageously identified the challenges that face us all, as well as the measures to be taken to meet them.

The Millennium Declaration traces the path that we must follow collectively in order to ensure that peace and security reign in a world where fear has been banished. It also established the main direction of international cooperation for development by setting measurable time-bound goals.

We must recognize that the hopes raised by the Declaration have largely crumbled. Conflicts continue to boil in several regions of the world, while the implacable grip of poverty, hunger and disease continues to tighten on the developing countries.

In the sphere of peace and security, Tunisia is convinced that coordinated action is necessary to develop collective and concerted responses to the new and old challenges that the international community must face. The most recent events on the international scene have highlighted the need to strengthen the United Nations, whose purposes and principles are now more than ever standards that must guide the international community.

In that context, we share the view expressed by the Secretary-General in his report, in which he calls in particular for the need to reform international institutions and to enhance and strengthen the effectiveness of the United Nations to enable it to fulfil the mandate accorded to it by the Charter. We wish in particular to underscore the importance of democratizing the Security Council, the principal organ responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. Democratization of the Council, which has been long awaited, is becoming increasingly indispensable in order to reflect the geopolitical realities of the twenty-first century and to enable the Security Council to deal with the changing nature of conflicts and to face new challenges to peace and security.

With regard to challenges raised by conflicts throughout the world, our gaze remains turned towards Iraq and the Middle East, which are still victims of violence. The ongoing tragedy being experienced by the Iraqi people is a source of great concern and anxiety for the international community. While reiterating our commitment to the independence and integrity of the territory and people of Iraq, we reaffirm the need for the international community to join efforts and for the United Nations to assume a leading role to establish peace and stability in that fraternal country, to open the path to reconstruction and to the restoration of normal living conditions.

The situation in the Middle East continues to deteriorate because of the ongoing occupation and Israel's delays in settling the Palestinian question. We reiterate our appeal to the Security Council to become

more involved, in keeping with relevant resolutions, and not employing a policy of double standards, to put an end to the escalation, to give concrete form to the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinians to establish their sovereign State with Jerusalem as its capital, and to ensure Israel's withdrawal from occupied Syrian and Lebanese territory. Tunisia learned with great concern of Israel's aggression against the Syrian Arab Republic. We forcefully condemn once again that aggression, which constituted a vile assault on the sovereignty of a fraternal Arab country and a serious violation of international law.

It is gratifying to note that Africa is increasingly at the centre of the international community's concerns. The magnitude of the challenges faced by several African regions is such that international mobilization is necessary to help the continent reverse current trends and avoid prolonged destabilization. We appeal to the developed countries and the United Nations system, the Security Council in particular, to strengthen their commitment to Africa and to continue their support for the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in order to stem the many conflicts and to promote political stability, without which the continent cannot tackle the urgent tasks of economic and social development.

An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. That old saying remains valid today. If applied, we would be able to save innocent lives and avoid destruction and destabilization. We welcome the Secretary-General's efforts to strengthen the capacity of the Organization in the area of conflict prevention. In that context, we underscore the need to support regional, subregional and national efforts to develop prevention strategies.

Likewise, we call for the strengthening of the partnership that the Security Council should establish with regional and subregional organizations in the area of peacekeeping, and also emphasize the need to improve cooperation between the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council.

Still in the sphere of peace and security, my country, Tunisia, also attaches great importance to the fight against terrorism in all its aspects. We stress the need to combine efforts, under United Nations auspices, to eradicate that dangerous phenomenon by eliminating its fundamental causes, particularly poverty, alienation and despair. Tunisia, which actively participated in the drafting of Security Council resolution 1373 (2001), adopted following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, advocates the establishment of an international code of conduct for the fight against this scourge.

We are convinced that the deterioration in the world situation requires us to adopt a global and multidimensional approach, based on interdependence between peace and security, on one hand, and development, on the other hand. We are also convinced that peace and security cannot be established and cannot last without harmonious development and the satisfaction of the needs of all the world's peoples.

The Millennium Declaration, the United Nations International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Monterrey, and the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development aroused great hope within the international community, particularly within the developing world, of finally witnessing the advent of a stable, just and united socio-economic order.

Despite the consensus that emerged and the commitments made to fight poverty and to promote sustainable development, we must note that many countries will not achieve some of the Development Goals contained in the Millennium Declaration. We would point out the increase in the number of people living in poverty throughout the world, particularly in Africa, a region where the achievement of those Goals poses the greatest challenge.

Moreover, six years after the World Food Summit, more than 820 million people still suffer from hunger and malnutrition — at a time when we are witnessing global food overproduction. Certainly, the primary responsibility for achieving the Millennium Goals rests with the developing countries, but it is also clear that their efforts deserve the support of the international community, particularly of their developed partners, because most of the developing countries will not succeed alone.

Debt alleviation must be more substantial and rapid so that the developing countries will be able to devote their resources to meeting the essential needs of their peoples, rather than to servicing debt. Access of the products of developing countries to world markets must be facilitated and improved. That means reducing agricultural subsidies and eliminating tariff barriers. Donor countries must also honour their commitment to increase official development assistance to 0.7 per cent of their gross national product.

Facilitating the active participation of developing countries in decisions made by the major international organizations — not only the United Nations, but also the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank — is also important.

Finally, a mechanism to help to finance the fight against poverty is now more necessary than ever. This is an added reason in favour of the General Assembly decision to create a World Solidarity Fund, which must now be put into operation.

We should also focus our attention on strengthening the review process of the outcomes of conferences and summits on economic and social development. In that respect, we welcome the adoption by the General Assembly, on 23 June 2003, of a resolution on the comprehensive and coordinated follow-up and implementation of the texts resulting from major conferences and summits organized by the United Nations in the economic and social fields. We believe that the resolution reflects the acknowledgement of the need to stimulate political momentum for the enforcement and follow-up of texts resulting from major conferences and summits. We must now implement the provisions of that resolution, including those concerning the holding of a summit in 2005 on the implementation of the Goals adopted at the Millennium Summit and other conferences.

In conclusion, we support the Secretary-General's proposal to create a panel of eminent personalities to promote the reforms. We believe it is essential that the choice of those personalities reflect the broadest possible geographic representation and meet the crucial requirement of neutrality. Moreover, those reforms must be fundamental and in accordance with the principles of the Charter. They must also aim at giving more weight to the work of our Organization and to its decisions and recommendations at an earlier stage, rather than being a matter of saving money or putting unjustified pressure on the General Assembly agenda, which constitutes, after all, the gamut of the concerns of the international community and its collective interests.

The planned reform must serve to confirm our common commitment to an effective multilateralism that will enable us to resolve world political problems in a fair and equitable way and can help to bring about the advent of an economic and social order where all countries may live in security and dignity and enjoy the benefits of globalization.

Ms. Rivero (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation endorses the statement of the Rio Group. We would simply like to emphasis a few items of particular interest to Uruguay.

First, we would like to express our particular gratitude for the Secretary-General's important and tireless efforts, which, as we all know, have lately been especially arduous. We have all been deeply moved by the terrorist attacks suffered by the Organization and the unjust loss of life.

For those reasons, we especially appreciate his valuable efforts to continue in his unflagging mission and fight to enable our Organization to overcome its ongoing challenges. We are especially grateful for his steadfast determination to try to prevent the urgent problems involving international peace and security from making us put aside other substantive matters requiring just as much of our attention.

As we have said in the general debate, Uruguay will continue to support the United Nations, and we are convinced that it is only through multilateral solutions that we can be successful in implementing our objectives. However, we should be realistic and accept that we cannot claim to resolve all questions related to international peace and security that concern us and, regrettably, that persist or arise in rapid succession, given that no sooner do we manage to bring one conflict under control than another one arises or a pre-existing one is rekindled.

We must thus come to terms with those issues of peace and security without abandoning our efforts to resolve them, while also devoting more time, energy and resources to tasks related to areas of economic and social development, which we can no longer put off, because it is in these areas that we find the roots of most of our political problems.

Secondly, and with respect to those other vital tasks, we would like to stress just how frustrating it is to note that despite the progress made in child health, more than 11 million children die annually before the age of five. How is it possible that, notwithstanding our ability to prevent that gross violation of human rights, we still have not managed to tackle the problem or mobilize the necessary funds for that purpose.

We cannot allow that situation to repeat itself year after year. We must immediately set up a mechanism to prevent this. Let us rely on cooperation if that is the way, implement a partnership with civil society and the business sector and look for ways to

make vaccines and medicine available to the most vulnerable groups to end, or at least mitigate, the magnitude of the tragedy. It is also for this reason that we are concerned over the lack of progress in moving towards economic and social development and the effective implementation of the priority Goals that were identified in the Millennium Declaration. We cannot wait until 2015 and risk finding that we have not achieved the Goals that we set for ourselves. We must urgently establish a work timetable with short-terms goals, which would make it possible to achieve gradual progress in implementing all of our commitments undertaken in the Millennium Declaration and to consolidate one by one the objectives towards which we are aspiring.

Like the Secretary-General, we feel quite hopeful that in 2005 we will be able to carry out a broad assessment of the progress made in implementing all of the commitments contained in the Millennium Declaration — an evaluation that we hope will mark a very important event. But we believe that an even better outcome would be to have the necessary political commitment to make the Millennium Declaration a reality.

Mr. Kazykhanov (Kazakhstan): We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive reports on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and on the work of the Organization, which, in fact, cover the entire agenda of the United Nations.

Peace and security remain the main priorities of the international community. We agree with the conclusion that the common security agenda should reflect a global consensus on the major threats to peace and security and our common response. It should strengthen international solidarity based on the shared universal values enshrined in the Charter.

Kazakhstan is confident that the United Nations has a sufficiently high potential for coordinating efforts of States to counter emerging threats and to develop proper instruments for creating a comprehensive security system. Kazakhstan firmly supports the efforts by the United Nations to strengthen its peacekeeping capacity. We share the opinion regarding the need to continue our search for methods of efficient response to complex emerging conflicts of our time, which often require simultaneous action in the areas of peacekeeping and development.

In the Millennium Declaration, States pledged to take measures to eliminate weapons of mass destruction. That goal can be achieved only through a multilateral and comprehensive approach and by developing transparent strategies which would enable us to make the world free from nuclear armaments. The existing international agreements in this area should be adapted to new realities.

Last year, the Secretary-General introduced a second set of United Nations reforms, which were endorsed by Member States in general. We agree that at this stage there is a need for a comprehensive analysis to assess the adequacy and efficiency of the main United Nations bodies, as well as the openness and transparency of their methods of work.

We believe that the main task of the international community is to strengthen the United Nations, which is our common tool. Without strengthening the entire United Nations system, it will be impossible to resolve global problems and the most acute regional conflicts. Kazakhstan believes that the reform of the United Nations should be comprehensive and should encompass all the main bodies of the United Nations. We share the opinion of the Secretary-General that the reform of the Security Council should be expedited in order to eliminate any doubts regarding its legitimacy and authority.

The question of improving the work of another main body of the United Nations — the General Assembly — is particularly relevant in view of its unique role as a universal forum for dealing with the global issues of our time. In the context of the ongoing processes, we consider it necessary to further optimize the agenda of the General Assembly so that it is better adapted to prevailing conditions. We believe that at its current session, the General Assembly should focus its attention on three cardinal issues: peace and security; sustainable development; and the reform of the United Nations. It is necessary to further strengthen the role of the United Nations in the social and economic area.

Kazakhstan supports the proposal by the Secretary-General to establish a high-level panel to examine the current challenges to peace and security and to strengthen the United Nations system. Like other countries, we look forward to receiving recommendations from the Secretary-General on the main aspects of the Millennium Declaration, based on the work of the high-level panel. We also believe that coordination between the United Nations and regional organizations must be reinvigorated. Such coordination would enable the Organization to effectively address crucial challenges to international peace and security. In this context, as mentioned in the statement made

during the general debate by our Minister for Foreign Affairs, Kazakhstan proposes to establish a permanent council of regional organizations under the auspices of the Secretary-General.

In the Millennium Declaration, we pledged to take coordinated actions against international terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime. As a result of the tragic events in Baghdad on 19 August, the international community lost talented people who were dedicated to the ideals of the United Nations. While strongly condemning that criminal act, we believe that such attacks must not be allowed to undermine the will of the international community in offering every assistance to countries that need the full support of the Organization.

It will be necessary during the current session to continue the process of increasing the number of States parties to all 12 international conventions and protocols against terrorism and of working towards adopting a comprehensive convention against terrorism.

We fully share the opinion of the Secretary-General that, although ambitious, the Millennium Development Goals can be reached at both global and national levels if, during the next 12 years, we maintain or increase the momentum that has been generated during the first three years of the new century. We believe that the United Nations should continue to play a critical role in ensuring steady progress towards global partnership for development and the implementation of the outcomes of the global forums.

Kazakhstan is dedicated to a comprehensive and coordinated strategy by the international community to promote sustainable development. We are convinced that development goals can be achieved only if favourable economic conditions prevail, together with peace and stability, and if we are willing to cooperate with other States in the effort to create a world without conflict, based on justice and prosperity.

Mr. Chidyausiku (Zimbabwe): I wish to add Zimbabwe's voice to the expressions of thanks and appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his report on the follow up to the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, contained in document A/58/323. I should also like to also associate myself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Morocco, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The report of the Secretary-General covers a wide range of pressing international topics and issues — issues with which Zimbabwe is preoccupied, and on which it hopes the international community will focus attention with a view to coming up with durable and lasting solutions to improve the quality of life of its people.

Zimbabwe believes that international peace and security can be achieved only when the legitimacy of the United Nations is respected by all Members, large and small. Peace has been achieved because of our belief in the principles laid down in the Charter with regard to collective security as a guarantor of world peace. Recent developments, however, resulting in the invasion and occupation of Iraq, a sovereign Member of the United Nations, have shaken the foundation on which the Organization was founded.

As the Secretary-General stated in his address to the Assembly at the beginning of this session, whereas States reserve the right to act unilaterally or in ad hoc coalitions, such logic represents a fundamental challenge to the principles on which, however imperfectly, world peace and stability have rested for the last 58 years. The Secretary-General further expressed his — and, indeed, our — concern that, if such a doctrine were applied arbitrarily, it could set precedents that could result in the proliferation of the unilateral and lawless use of force, with or without justification.

Scarcely two weeks have gone by since that address by the Secretary-General and we have seen a concrete manifestation of that concern in the attack by Israel against Syria without provocation. We can see the excessive use of force and the occupation of Palestine by the same Member State, in disregard of a number of United Nations resolutions on the matter. That behaviour has to stop. The resort to unilateral action, in defiance of the United Nations, is a sure route to a less safe world. Unilateralism undermines the sanctity of the principles upon which the United Nations was founded. After all, since it came into existence, the United Nations has successfully resolved numerous conflicts throughout the world. Any undermining of United Nations authority threatens nations both big and small.

Since its independence in 1980, Zimbabwe has placed high on its agenda the issues embodied in the Millennium Development Goals. We further reiterated our commitment to those goals when we took part in the Millennium Summit. We have made strides in poverty reduction, the provision of universal primary education, gender equality and the empowerment of women, to name but a few issues. This we have done while fighting the odds as a developing country.

Zimbabwe agrees with the Secretary-General that equity and growth are one of the benchmarks that define the vision of the Millennium Development Goals.

HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other communicable diseases are of great concern to all nations. As the General Assembly is aware, Zimbabwe is among the countries in sub-Saharan Africa where the pandemic has reversed some of the gains our countries had made in human resources development. We have declared the HIV/AIDS pandemic a national disaster. As a Government, we have put in place several policy initiatives to combat the disease with the objective of reversing its destructive and deadly effects. Zimbabwe therefore joins hands and actively participates in all current international endeavours focused at reversing the spread of the disease. This is indeed a challenge we cannot win on our own. Zimbabwe calls upon the international community to meet these commitments that were made on this issue when our heads of State or Government met at Headquarters in June 2001 at a special General Assembly session on the matter.

We are very grateful to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, set up the by Secretary-General to seek the resources to fight this pandemic. The Fund, as a multilateral institution, is doing a splendid job, despite resource constraints. It has disbursed resources to the countries in need without favour, complementing very well the work being done by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. Zimbabwe believes this is the best route to address the issue of allocating resources to all countries in need. Singling out certain prospective recipients of such assistance for exclusion makes no sense, for the disease respects no boundaries.

Zimbabwe is concerned that the developed countries are not moving fast enough in meeting their stated obligations on such issues as trade, debt relief, and official development assistance. The deadlock and collapse of negotiations at the World Trade Organization (WTO) ministerial meeting in Cancún, Mexico, in September, is a statement by the developing countries that our trading partners can no longer determine the negotiating agenda that meets only their subjective interests. We are in this world together, big nation or small, developed or developing. We need to make world trade work for the benefit of all, not just a few.

Such an approach to world trade would go a long way in making Governments meet their commitments to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals we adopted here. It is our hope that, as WTO members continue their negotiations in Geneva, there will be political will on the part of the developed countries to engage seriously in negotiations to enable world trade to be fair to all.

Zimbabwe believes that our recently completed fast-track land redistribution programme has gone some way in our quest to meet the Millennium Declaration Goals. There can never be any sustainable development in Zimbabwe without addressing the issue of land distribution. However, our detractors have decided to vilify my Government for taking the bold decision to give land to the people, a way of addressing the issue of poverty alleviation and sustainable development.

We believe the United Nations Development Programme, as the development arm of the United Nations, has a crucial role to play here in securing financial assistance for capital and other inputs for the new farmer in Zimbabwe. This is the only long-term viable way to help the Zimbabwean people to fight hunger, poverty and disease, in accordance with the Millennium Development Goals. We have allocated national resources towards this programme but we would appreciate some assistance. As regards the compensation of the former commercial farmers, we leave that issue to those that made a commitment to fund such a programme at the Lancaster House Conference of 1979.

Human rights, democracy and good governance are cardinal values that unite nations and peoples. Indeed, there can be no development in any nation if any of those principles of human existence are violated or abused. Zimbabwe agrees that all nations should advance these values as part of fulfilling the Millennium Development Goals.

Such values are dear to Zimbabwe as it had to wage a war for its people to be able to enjoy these rights. Since 1980, we have religiously held elections every five years, in accordance with our constitution. Each time the people of Zimbabwe have been afforded the opportunity to freely elect the Government of their choice. The record shows that on a number of occasions the ruling party has lost elections at the municipal and at the parliamentary levels to the opposition parties. This tells the story of a country that subscribes to democracy, not a country that is resistant to democracy.

It is here that I want to set the record straight. Zimbabwe cannot be described as a country where resistance to democracy is strong, even though the majority of the people clearly desire change. I do not know which majority is being referred to. If some people want Zimbabwe to return to its former colonial status under the name Rhodesia in order for us to be seen as being democratic, this we cannot do. Democracy was not given to us on a platter by our former colonizer; we had to fight a bitter war to proclaim it. We will remain loyal to our cause of improving the quality of life for our people and we will never revert to being a colony again.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.